

# 3

## Reading for Understanding

### ▶ Key Ideas

#### BEFORE, YOU LEARNED

The expansion of the war forced the British to spread their military resources over a wide area.

#### NOW YOU WILL LEARN

The Continental Army, their allies, and the American people brought about an American victory.

### ▶ Vocabulary

#### TERMS & NAMES

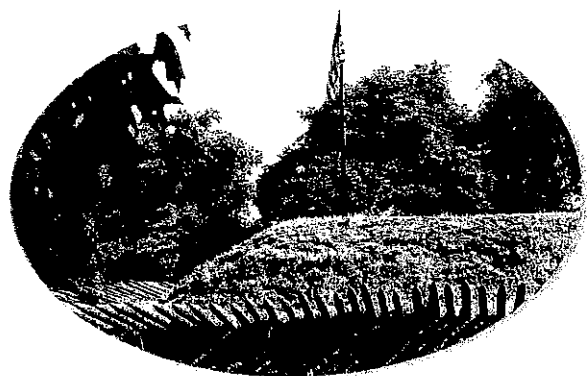
**Battle of Charles Town** British siege of Charles Town (Charleston), South Carolina, in May 1780, in which the Americans suffered their worst defeat of the war

**Lord Cornwallis** (korn•WAHL•ihs) British general whose campaigns in the South led to his defeat at Yorktown

**Battle of Yorktown** final battle of the war, in which French and American forces led by George Washington defeated British General Cornwallis

#### BACKGROUND VOCABULARY

**redoubt** (re•DOWT) a small fort

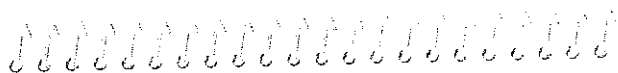


Visual Vocabulary  
redoubt at Yorktown

### ▶ Reading Strategy

Re-create the diagram shown at right. As you read and respond to the **KEY QUESTIONS**, use the diagram to record important events in the order in which they occurred.

See Skillbuilder Handbook, page R5.



#### SEQUENCE EVENTS

British capture Savannah, 1778.	British capture Charles Town, 1780.
British capture Georgia.	

▶ GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS  
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# The Path to Victory

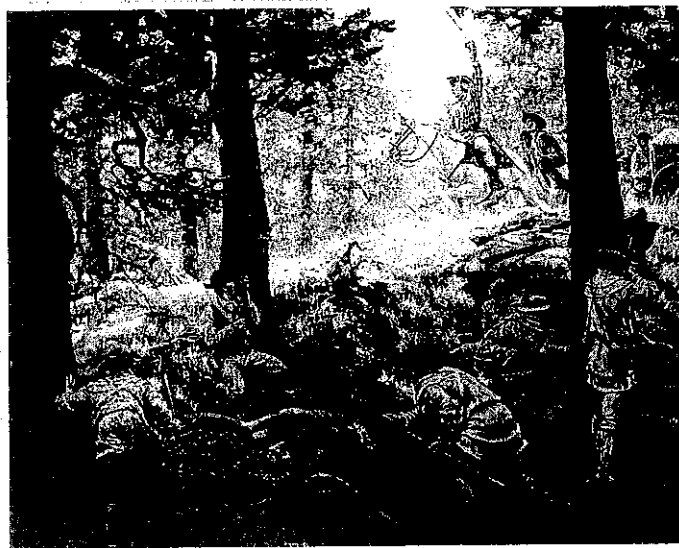
## One American's Story

James P. Collins, a 16-year-old American, found himself in the midst of a civil war as the Revolution raged in the South. He watched as both sides committed war crimes. At the Battle of King's Mountain, fought on the border of North and South Carolina in October 1780, he saw American Patriots surround and slaughter about 1,000 American Loyalist militia, led by Major General Patrick Ferguson. Collins described the scene.

### PRIMARY SOURCE

“The dead lay in heaps on all sides, while the groans of the wounded were heard in every direction. I could not help turning away from the scene before me with horror and, though exulting in victory, could not refrain from shedding tears.”

—James P. Collins, quoted in *The Spirit of Seventy-Six*



The Battle of  
King's Mountain

As James Collins's story demonstrates, fighting in the South was vicious.

## The War Moves South

**KEY QUESTION** What happened when the British shifted the war to the South?

After three years of fighting in the North, the British were no closer to victory. Although they had captured many important Northern coastal cities, they didn't have enough troops to control the countryside.

**The British Change Their Strategy** In 1778 the British decided to move the war to the South. They believed that most Southerners were Loyalists, who would support an invading British army.

The British also expected Southern slaves to escape and join them because they had promised to grant the slaves freedom. Although thousands of African Americans did join the British, not all were set free.

**Savannah and Charles Town Fall** In December 1778, the British captured the port of Savannah, Georgia. (See Map 49 on p. 215.) They then conquered most of Georgia. In 1780, a British army led by General Henry Clinton landed in South Carolina. They trapped American forces in Charles Town (now Charleston), the largest Southern city. **The Battle of Charles Town** ended when the city surrendered. The Americans lost almost their entire Southern army. It was the worst American defeat of the war.

After that loss, Congress assigned General Horatio Gates—the victor at Saratoga—to form a new Southern army. Continental soldiers led by Baron de Kalb formed the army's core. Gates added about 2,000 new and untrained militia. He then headed for Camden, South Carolina, to challenge the army led by the British general **Lord Cornwallis**. (Cornwallis had assumed control of British forces after Clinton returned to New York.)

In August 1780, Gates's army ran into British troops outside Camden. (See Map 49 on p. 215.) The Americans were in no condition to fight. They were out of supplies and half-starved. Even worse, Gates put the inexperienced militia along part of the frontline instead of behind the veterans. When the British attacked, the militia panicked and ran. Gates also fled,

## CONNECT To Today

### MILITARY COMMUNICATION

In the 18th century, military communications were painfully slow. Ships from London might take up to four months to bring orders to British generals.

Mail did not travel much faster within America itself. British General Cornwallis was frustrated by the "delay and difficulty of conveying letters" and "the impossibility of waiting for answers." Not only were journeys long, but bands of Patriots made sure that British lines of communication were constantly disrupted.

Today, wars are fought with the help of technology that provides instant communication. Computers and satellites relay information quickly between sea, air, and ground forces. For example, a video of an attack on enemy forces in Afghanistan can be sent via satellite to the Florida command center and then relayed live to the White House.



A woman gives a message to an officer of the Continental Army.



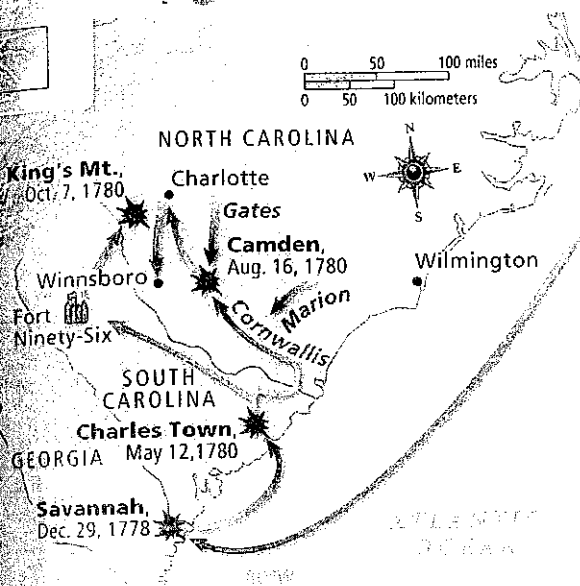
A modern soldier relays battlefield information.

### CRITICAL THINKING

1. **Draw Conclusions** Which side in the Revolutionary War would have suffered most from slow communications? Why?
2. **Evaluate** What are the advantages of today's faster communications?

## War in the South 1778–1781

Map ① Dec. 1778–Oct. 1780



but de Kalb remained with his soldiers and received fatal wounds. This second defeat in the South ended Gates's term as head of an army. American spirits fell to a new low.

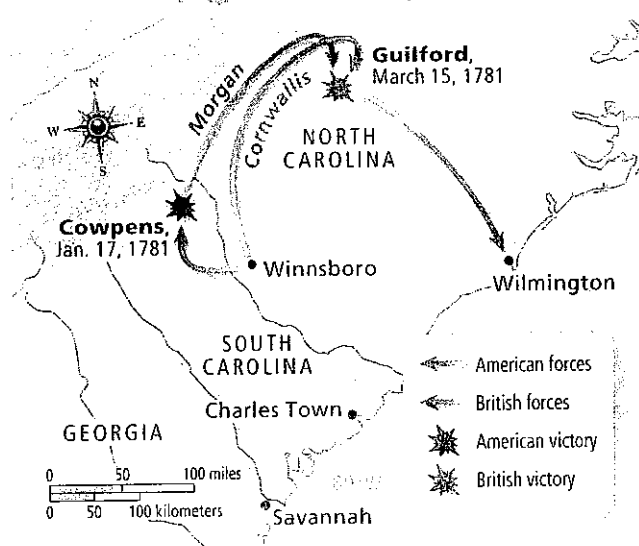
**Guerrilla War** Although the Americans had been defeated at Camden, the British were having difficulty controlling the South. The countryside was hostile and filled with more rebel sympathizers than Loyalists. Rebel guerrillas repeatedly attacked British messengers. This made it difficult for British forces moving inland to keep in touch with their bases on the coast. British commanders in the South were discovering what General Burgoyne had realized in the North: the countryside was a dangerous place for the British army.

One of the most famous rebel guerrilla leaders was Francis Marion, called the "Swamp Fox" because he led cunning attacks from his base in the swamps. An American officer described Marion's guerrilla band: "Their number did not exceed 20 men and boys, some white, some black, and all mounted, but most of them miserably equipped." Despite their poor equipment, Marion's men were able to cut the British supply line that led inland from Charles Town.

**General Greene Takes Charge** After Gates's defeat at Camden, Washington put Nathanael Greene in charge of the Southern army. Greene was one of Washington's best generals. In January 1781, he sent part of his army south to confront Cornwallis. In a formal, linear battle, the Americans won a spectacular victory at Cowpens. (See Map ② above.) The victory proved that Americans had mastered the formal battle tactics of the British.

Cornwallis's main army now pursued Greene up into North Carolina. The British still had the advantage in a full-scale battle due to their greater

Map ② Jan. 1781–April 1781



### Connect Geography & History

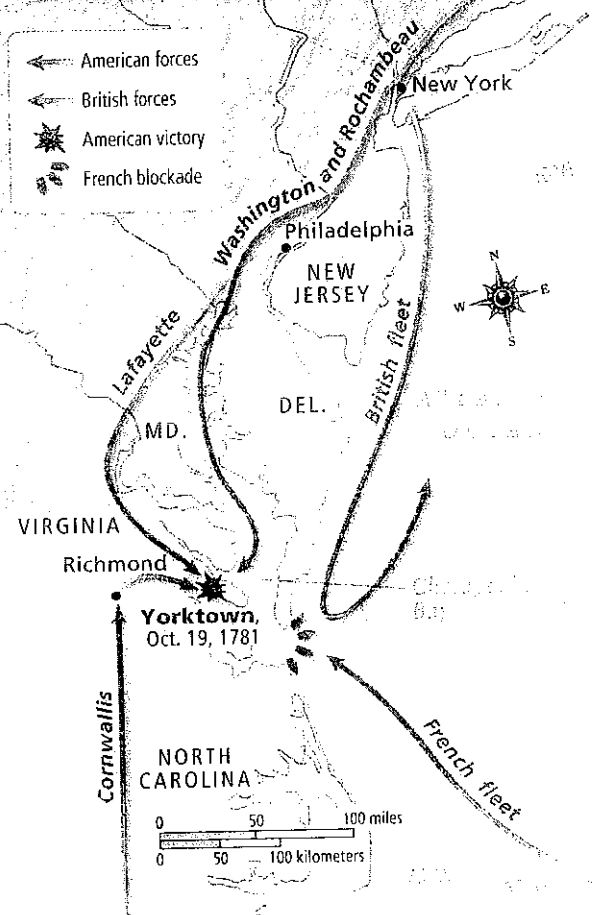
1. **Place** Where did the British begin their attacks in the South?
2. **Identify Problems and Solutions** Why do you think Cornwallis headed for the coast after the Battle of Guilford?

firepower. However, the Americans used their knowledge of the landscape to keep one step ahead of the advancing British. Greene's strategy was to let the British wear themselves out. When the Americans did fight, they did their best to make sure the British suffered heavy losses. In fact, Cornwallis lost so many men at the Battle of Guilford Court House that he decided to retreat to Wilmington, on the coast. With his army exhausted, Cornwallis had to face a bitter truth: there were more active Patriots than Loyalists in the South. Britain's southern strategy had failed.

**CAUSES AND EFFECTS** Explain what happened when the British shifted the war to the South.

## Animated GEOGRAPHY Battle of Yorktown 1781

[Click here](#) to see the interactive map  
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### Connect Geography & History

- 1. Movement** What routes did American forces take to reach Yorktown?
- 2. Synthesize** How did the allies take advantage of geography to defeat the British?

## The End of the War

**KEY QUESTION** How was Cornwallis trapped?

Cornwallis was frustrated by his setbacks in the Carolinas. He had come to believe that Southern rebels were relying on Virginia for their supplies. So, in 1781, without waiting for orders, he marched north into Virginia. In August Cornwallis set up his base at Yorktown, located on a peninsula in Chesapeake Bay. From there, his army could receive supplies by ship from New York. It was a fatal mistake.

**Setting the Trap** Cornwallis's decision gave Washington a golden opportunity to trap the British on the peninsula. Washington first joined forces with General Jean Rochambeau's French army in New York and headed south. In August 1781, as these armies came south, a large French fleet arrived from the West Indies and blocked Chesapeake Bay. (See map at left.) The French fleet prevented the British ships from reaching Yorktown and delivering supplies—and prevented the British in Yorktown from escaping.

Meanwhile, the **Battle of Yorktown** had begun. The British tried to protect themselves by encircling the town with numerous **redoubts**, or small forts. These forts were meant to keep the allies' artillery at a distance from the town. But as the allies captured British redoubts, they brought their artillery closer to the town's defenses. The American and French cannon bombarded Yorktown, turning its buildings to rubble. Cornwallis had no way out. On October 19, 1781, he surrendered his force of about 8,000.



## History through Art

Although fighting continued in the South and on the frontier, Yorktown was the last major battle of the war. When the British prime minister, Lord North, heard the news, he gasped, "It is all over!" Indeed, he and other British leaders were soon forced to resign. Britain's new leaders began to negotiate a peace treaty, which is discussed in the next section.

▲ **SUMMARIZE** Describe how Cornwallis was trapped.

## Why the Americans Won

▼ **KEY QUESTION** How were the Americans able to defeat the British?

By their persistence, the Americans won independence even though they faced many obstacles. As you have read, the American army lacked training and experience. American soldiers served only for short periods of time. They often lacked proper supplies and weapons. In contrast, the British forces ranked among the best trained in the world. Yet the Americans had advantages that had not been obvious at first; only as the war progressed did American strengths become apparent. The chart on the next page sets these American strengths against the weaknesses of the British.

The British were defeated not only by the American army, but by civilians who kept the resistance alive. The British were not prepared for a popular uprising. In Europe, only armies fought the wars, and civilians either fled or hid before advancing forces. In America, however, the British discovered that

*The Surrender of Lord Cornwallis* by John Trumbull shows a British officer surrendering to a mounted American officer, with French troops on the left and Americans on the right. Unwilling to face public humiliation, Cornwallis pretended to be ill, sending General Charles O'Hara to offer his sword to the French. The French sent O'Hara to General Washington, who allowed General Benjamin Lincoln to accept the sword of surrender.

**CRITICAL VIEWING** How does the positioning of the troops symbolize the British defeat?



large segments of the population were actively involved in a political cause. Even if the British had succeeded in defeating an American army, they likely would never have been able to conquer the American people.

## CONNECT to the Essential Question

**How was it possible that American Patriots gained their independence from the powerful British Empire?**

### AMERICAN STRENGTHS

Patriots fought for their lives, their property, and their political ideals.

Many civilians actively supported the Revolution. Patriots used many techniques to rally popular support. Rebellion broke out across the continent.

American generals learned from their mistakes. Washington inspired loyalty and patriotism in his troops.

France supplied money and troops. France and Spain weakened British forces by expanding the war. The Dutch helped carry French military supplies to the Americans.

Americans fought close to home; the militia made sure that the British could not live off the land.

Although Americans had fewer troops, local militia helped swell American forces. Altogether, 250,000 may have fought for the Patriot cause.

#### Motivation



#### Popular support



#### Leadership



#### Foreign allies



#### Communication and supplies



#### Troop strength



### BRITISH WEAKNESSES

The British and their Hessian mercenaries fought merely for pay.

The British were unprepared for a popular uprising. There was no widespread support for the war in Britain.

British generals were overconfident and disunited, their efforts often uncoordinated.

No allies. As more European countries turned against Britain, the British were forced to fight many enemies.

Orders from London might take months to reach America. The British were also forced to transport food and supplies over 3,000 miles of ocean.

By 1781 the British army had around 54,000 troops fighting rebel forces.

**CRITICAL THINKING** Compare and Contrast Which strength do you think was most important to the American victory?

**Fond Farewells** In late 1783, the last British ships and troops left New York City. As the American army disbanded, soldiers such as Joseph Plumb Martin of Connecticut had mixed emotions. Martin had enlisted in 1776, at the age of 15. He experienced the terrible winter at Valley Forge and the winning battle at Yorktown. Many years later, he wrote about his last day as a regular.

#### PRIMARY SOURCE

“There was as much sorrow as joy. . . . We had lived together as a family of brothers for several years, . . . had shared with each other the hardships, dangers, and sufferings incident to a soldier’s life; had sympathized with each other in trouble and sickness; . . . And now we were to be . . . parted forever.”

—Joseph Plumb Martin, quoted in *The Revolutionaries*

In his farewell letter to his armies, George Washington wrote that the army’s endurance “through almost every possible suffering and discouragement for the space of eight long years, was little short of a standing miracle.” Like Washington—and the British—American Patriots were astonished at their achievement.

▲ **SUMMARIZE** Explain how the Americans were able to defeat the British.



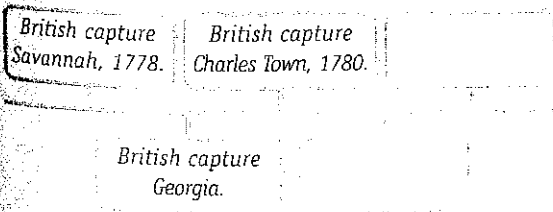
### Section Assessment

#### TERMS & NAMES

1. Explain the importance of
  - Battle of Charles Town
  - Lord Cornwallis
  - Battle of Yorktown

#### USING YOUR READING NOTES

2. **Sequence** Complete the diagram to show the most importance events of this section.



#### KEY IDEAS

3. Why didn't the British control of coastal cities bring them victory in the South?
4. When and why did Congress form a new Southern army?
5. How did the allies force the British to surrender?

#### CRITICAL THINKING

6. **Make Generalizations** Does military superiority always guarantee victory? Why or why not?
7. **WHAT IF?** What might have happened at Yorktown without the aid of the French fleet?
8. **Connect to Today** What can the history of the Revolution teach us about modern conflicts?
9. **Writing Letter** Use books or the Internet to find out about the actions of Lord North after the British defeat at Yorktown. As North, write a letter to your king explaining the defeat.



#### ONLINE QUIZ

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## RALLYING TO THE CAUSE

During the Revolution, American Patriots supported the war effort in a variety of ways. Why was popular support so important for the American victory?

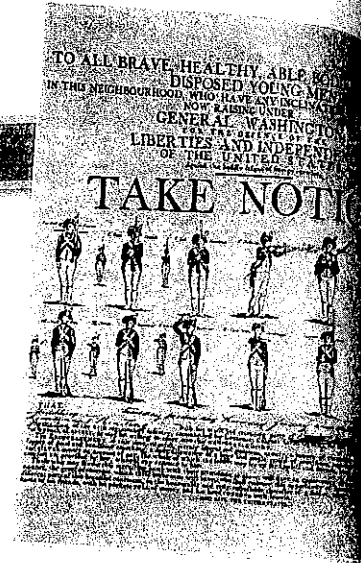
### RAISING THE LIBERTY POLE

Americans imagined liberty as a tree grown from a seed planted by the early colonists. Many American communities had a liberty tree (or pole) in the center of town that served as a meeting spot where Patriots rallied supporters and exchanged news.

### Teens in History

#### THE YOUNG ENLIST

Although the Continental Army was not supposed to enlist boys younger than sixteen, recruiters did not usually ask for proof of age. In fact, teenage boys made up a large proportion of the army. Posters like this one were designed to persuade young men to enlist.



To the enemies of our country! May they have cobweb breeches, a *porcupine saddle*, a hard-trotting horse, and an eternal journey!"



"May the enemies of America be destitute of (lacking in) beef and claret (wine)"



#### PATRIOTIC CURSE

Patriots raised their spirits by laughing at the enemy.



## PATRIOT POET

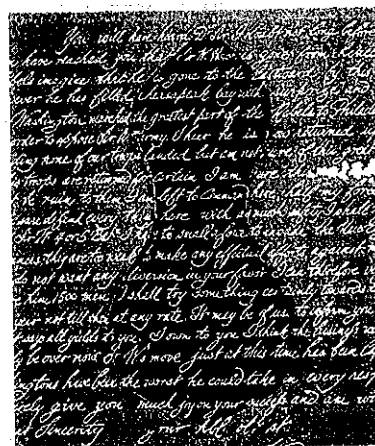
Phillis Wheatley, the first African-American writer to achieve fame, was a poet who supported the Patriot cause. During the war, Washington invited her to his headquarters after she sent him a poem that ended with this verse:

*"Proceed, great chief,  
with virtue on thy side,  
Thy ev'ry action  
let the goddess guide.  
A crown, a mansion,  
and a throne that shine,  
With gold unfading,  
Washington be thine."*



## SECRET CODES

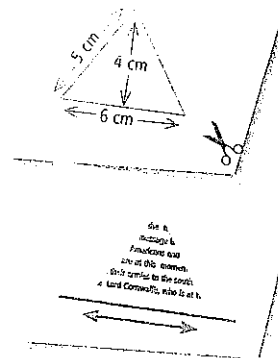
Information was often coded, in case letters fell into enemy hands. One kind of secret message did not look like a code at all, but lay hidden in an innocent-looking letter like the one shown here. By cutting the right shape out of another piece of paper and laying it on top of the letter, the secret message would be revealed.



## Activity

### Decode a secret message!

- 1 In the middle of a sheet of paper, cut out a triangle with these dimensions:  
Base: 6 cm; Height: 4 cm; Sides: 5 cm.
- 2 Place the sheet over the message below. Align the base of the triangle with the blue line below the message. Then slide the sheet slowly from left to right until you find the secret message.



M. may have told you the secret news by this time. But, if you have not heard, the message is that the city of New York will be attacked by some Americans and French, who are growing bolder day by day and are at this moment moving their armies there. They will not take their armies to the south to attack British forces there because my Lord Cornwallis, who is at Yorktown, is not a threat.